

WOZ WAY PLAZA: SIGN 3

A typical western American river, the Guadalupe is often no more than a trickle in the summer. But with the heavy winter rains, this sleeping giant can rise out of its bed and wreak havoc on surrounding homes and businesses. In 1995, the waters rushed at 11,000 cubic feet per second. Picture the force of 11,000 basketballs being thrown every second, and you can understand why that one flood alone can cause hundreds of millions of dollars in damage.

Though flood protection was the underlying impetus for the Guadalupe River Park & Gardens project, the vision for the park called for something more aesthetic than the usual concrete-lined banks constructed by many riverside cities. It asked that the natural character of the river be preserved as much as possible and that an accessible urban park be created. The original ideas for the park, first presented in the early 1960s, were discarded and new, more ecologically sensitive plan was adopted. Though Woz Way Plaza is one of the most urban areas in the park, even here steps have been taken to assure that the natural habitat is preserved.

When the volume of water in the riverbed increases, it spills from the natural channel into an underground floodwater bypass that runs between Woz Way and Park Avenue. An alternative to deepening the natural riverbed, this underground bypass captures and substantially slows the river's wintertime waters. At its maximum flood volume, about 8,000 cubic feet per second will spill into the bypass, leaving the rest in the natural channel.